

Local flexibility on speed limits is a quick and low-cost way to make cycling safer and more popular

Inspired by the popularity of cycling and walking in COVID times, Metropolitan councils want the State Government to make it easier to reduce speed limits on local roads to making cycling safer.

Spearheaded by former mayors and current Yarra and Banyule councillors, the Metropolitan Transport Forum wants councils to be able to declare 30 km speed limits on local roads to boost safer cycling and walking.

Through MTF, which represents 26 Melbourne local councils covering over 4 million residents, the councillors say cycling could be made much safer for minimal cost.

MTF Cycling Ambassador, Banyule Cr Tom Melican, said an unexpected but welcome consequence of COVID restrictions was seeing more people cycling and walking in their neighbourhood.

“Lower speeds on selected local streets will encourage more walking and cycling by helping people feel safer,” he said.

“It can take months if not years of negotiations between local councils and the Department of Transport to make even the smallest changes to speed limits on residential roads.”

He stressed that this does not apply to speed limits on state roads or highways – its only for selected local roads controlled by councils.

“Most car drivers will hardly notice the change, with journey times only changing by a few seconds at most.”

Yarra Councillor Jackie Fristacky said a recent 30km trial in Fitzroy-Collingwood local streets, was assessed by Monash University Accident Research Centre as very positive for personal health and road safety.

“Bike riders and pedestrians feel safer with lower speed limits. This will help get many more people walking or riding for local trips. It is far safer for cars too!”

Cr Melican said changes prompted by COVID should prompt a rethink of bureaucratic process in transport decision making.

“Many changes could be tried as pop-up ideas and reversed if required.”

"We are in a period of rapid change, and we need to be able to respond just as rapidly," he said.

A more detailed story is available at: <http://edunity.com.au/getting-the-wheels-turning-fast-and-almost-free/>

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